

Appl. No. 09/ 954,771
Amdt. Dated February 9, 2004
Reply to Office Action of October 9, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 5, please amend the first full paragraph and the one immediately thereafter as follows:

The container 14 may be removably affixed to the base housing 12 by a vertically ascending, mounting rod 13 which may be threadedly, or otherwise, secured to the base frame 18, typically in a central position of the base frame 18 as at 13a. The rod is threaded at its upper end and cooperates with a conventional keyed, locking member 26 which acts against the top lid, 27 of the container 14 to snugly secure the container 14 to the base portion 12 by acting to force the lid 27 downwardly against the Plexiglas plates 20 which bottom against the container frame 15. In turn, the frame 15 acts against the top frame 16 of the housing 12, and thence against the base frame 18. In this assembled, rigid condition, the vending machine has, in the prior art, been in condition for display and distribution of merchandise.

In the prior art Model 80 machine a mechanical front plate 30 has been provided with mechanism 22 for accepting coins and thereafter mechanically dispensing, upon actuation of handle 24, materials confined in the container 14 downwardly through the door 28, to a customer. In the prior art Model 80, the front plate 30 is pivotally mounted about the bottom front edge of the base frame 18 as at 43. Coins exiting the coin mechanism are dropped into a coin box 31 positioned inside the base housing 12, resting on the base plate, or frame, 18 behind the pivoted mechanism plate 30. In order to remove coins from the box shown at 31, the mechanism plate must be pivoted forwardly about its lower edge, and removed, or tilted forwardly far enough to allow removal of the coin box 31, forwardly through the opening provided by tilting the plate 30. Of

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course, in the clamped, locked, vending condition described above, the mechanism plate cannot be tilted forwardly. In this position, forward motion is prevented by downwardly projecting lip 15b on the front of frame 15 which interlocks with lips 30b on the plate 30. In order to permit such forward movement, the storage container 14 must be tilted backwardly about its lower rear edge sufficient to allow the mechanism plate interlock with the frame lip 15a to be disconnected. It has been found that while ordinarily the lock 26 acting through the top cover 27 sufficiently rigidly secures the container 14 to the base 12, occasionally during assembly in the field, the condition of the lock 26 is somewhat loose and the application of a manual jarring force in the direction of arrow 35 can tilt the container backwardly and upwardly sufficient to allow the plate to be released as illustrated in Figure 1. Also, the cover 27 is conventionally constructed of sheet metal which can be deflected downwardly adjacent the lock 26 when forced, to allow the release described. It has been found, in the field, that unauthorized forcing, and tilting, of the storage bin 14 about its rear, with the resultant release of the mechanism plate and hence access to the coin box, has resulted in significant monetary loss to the operators of these bulk vending machines.